

RETAIL PRICES - MARCH QUARTER, 1952.

All Items - "C" Series.

"C" Series index numbers of retail prices of all items (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1,000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases, March Quarter, 1952.

City.	Index Number.	Increase from Year Ended June, 1939.	Increase from March Quarter, 1951.	Increase from December Quarter, 1951.
		%	%	%
Brisbane ..	2,006	132.4	24.4	3.7
Toowoomba ..	2,022	137.6	24.6	4.0
Rockhampton ..	2,033	136.1	24.6	4.3
Townsville ..	2,082	128.3	26.1	3.8
Bundaberg ..	2,008	138.8	25.0	5.1
Warwick ..	1,994	142.6	25.3	4.0

The rate of increase of retail prices in Brisbane in the March quarter of 1952 was the smallest since the September quarter of 1950. The "C" Series Index Number increased by 3.7 per cent., compared with 7.7 per cent. in the December quarter, and 5.8 per cent. in the September quarter, of 1951. Clothing and footwear showed a rise of only 2.1 per cent., compared with 2.8 per cent. in the preceding quarter and a maximum rise of 9.7 per cent. which was reached in the June quarter of 1951. Miscellaneous items also showed a relatively small rise - 1.9 per cent. Food and grocery prices, although increasing by less than half as much as in the last quarter of 1951, continued to show a big rise; and their latest increase of 6.8 per cent. has only been exceeded twice, viz., in the September and December quarters of 1951 when increases of 9.3 and 16.1 per cent. were recorded respectively.

In spite of the more rapid rise of food and grocery prices during recent quarters, clothing and footwear prices in the March quarter of 1952 were 252.6 per cent. higher than their pre-war level, compared with a rise of only 167.5 per cent. in food and groceries. Miscellaneous items (household drapery, hardware, fuel, light, fares, &c.) had increased by 80.7 per cent.

Rises in the March quarter of 1952 in the five provincial cities for which index numbers are available were all slightly greater than the rise in Brisbane, the largest being 5.1 per cent. in Bundaberg. Since 1938-39, average prices in four of these five cities have risen a little more than Brisbane prices, while in Townsville, which before the war had, and still has, the highest average prices of the six cities, the index number has increased a little less (128.3 per cent.) than in Brisbane (132.4 per cent.).

Percentage changes during the last quarter and since 1938-39 in food and groceries, clothing and footwear, and the miscellaneous group of items are shown in the next table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases, March Quarter, 1952.

City.	Food and Groceries.		Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1951.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1951.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Dec. Quarter, 1951.
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane ..	167.5	6.8	252.6	2.1	81.5	1.9
Toowoomba ..	186.5	7.5	249.3	2.7	80.3	0.9
Rockhampton ..	165.1	8.2	250.4	2.2	84.3	1.3
Townsville ..	154.3	6.5	249.8	2.1	88.0	2.0
Bundaberg ..	163.2	11.0	253.4	1.4	79.5	1.2
Warwick ..	173.2	6.7	253.1	1.9	80.7	1.7

Food and Groceries.

During the March quarter, increases recorded in the food and groceries index numbers ranged from 6.5 per cent. in Townsville to 11.0 per cent. in Bundaberg. A major part of the increase in Brisbane was due to higher meat prices, and appreciable price rises occurred for milk, potatoes, butter, eggs, and bread. There were also small increases in the prices of a large number of miscellaneous grocery lines. Onions, which decreased in price in the previous quarter, showed a further fall.

Rent. The rent index remained stationary in Bundaberg but some variations were recorded in other towns for which data are collected.

Clothing and Footwear.

The increase of 2.1 per cent. in the clothing and footwear index number for Brisbane during the March quarter of 1952 was the lowest quarterly increase in this index since March quarter, 1950, when a rise of 1.3 per cent. was recorded. Principal factors in the increase were rises in men's suits and shirts, and men's and women's footwear.

Miscellaneous Items.

The increase in the miscellaneous items index during the quarter under review (1.9 per cent. in Brisbane), which was appreciably less than that recorded in December quarter, 1951 (3.9 per cent.), was due to increased prices of gas and firewood and a rise in fares.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required, in March quarter, 1952, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Items.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	2	1	0	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	19	10	$\frac{1}{4}$	19	9	$\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	6 $\frac{1}{2}$
Rockhampton ..	1	0	3 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	18	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	3	1	0	7 $\frac{3}{4}$
Townsville ..	1	0	9	1	1	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	19	6		1	0	1 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	1	8 $\frac{1}{2}$
Bundaberg ..	1	0	0 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	9	15	7	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	7 $\frac{1}{4}$
Warwick ..		19	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{4}$	16	11		19	11	$\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	11 $\frac{3}{4}$

In the five provincial cities for which index numbers are calculated, the cost of all items together retained much the same relativity to Brisbane prices during March quarter, 1952, as in December quarter, 1951. The largest movement recorded in these relative prices was in Bundaberg, where goods costing £1 in Brisbane would have cost £1 0s. 0 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in March quarter, compared with 19s. 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in December quarter.

Prices of food and groceries increased, in relation to Brisbane, in Toowoomba, Rockhampton, and Bundaberg, remained stationary in Warwick, and decreased in Townsville. Larger increases in food and grocery prices in Bundaberg resulted in food prices in that city again becoming higher than in Brisbane, after having been lower during December quarter.

In relation to Brisbane prices, clothing and footwear prices rose slightly during the quarter under review in Toowoomba and Rockhampton, remained unchanged in Townsville, and decreased slightly in Bundaberg and Warwick.

The relativity between the prices of miscellaneous items in Townsville and Brisbane also remained stationary, while decreases in these relative prices were recorded in the other four cities covered by the survey.

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates.

Following the publication of the index numbers for the March quarter, 1952, the basic wage rates of the Commonwealth Court were automatically adjusted from 1st May, 1952. The index numbers, the new wage rates, and the amounts of the adjustments are shown in the next table. The latest basic wage rates for males and females declared by the various State industrial authorities, and the dates from which they operated, are also shown. Commonwealth rates operated from the beginning of the first full pay period in May.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates.Australian Capital Cities.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index ("C" Series), 1st Quarter, 1952.	Commonwealth Basic Wage.		State Basic Wage.				
		Males. ^a	Increase on Previous Rate.		Males.	Females.	Date of Operation.	
		£ s. d.	s. d.		£ s. d.	£ s. d.		
Brisbane	2,006	10 7 0	8 0		10 7 0	6 18 6	28.4.52	
Sydney	2,167	11 3 0	7 0		11 3 0	8 7 0	1.5.52	
Melbourne	2,059	10 12 0	3 0		(10 12 0)	a	1.5.52 ^b	
Adelaide	2,052	10 11 0	6 0		10 11 0	7 18 0	1.5.52	
Perth	2,080	10 14 0	9 0		11 3 10	7 5 6	28.4.52	
Hobart	2,080	10 14 0	6 0		(10 14 0)	a	1.5.52 ^b	

^a The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

^b No State wage declared. The rate shown is that of the Commonwealth Court which is followed to a large extent.

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BRISBANE.

14th May, 1952.

Table No. 1 - The "All Items" Retail Prices Index - "C" Series.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended March, 1952.	Quarter Ended -				
				March, 1951.	June, 1951.	Sept., 1951.	Decr., 1951.	March, 1952.
Brisbane	863	1,079	1,859	1,612	1,698	1,796	1,934	2,006
Toowoomba	851	1,092	1,873	1,623	1,705	1,821	1,944	2,022
Rockhampton ..	861	1,084	1,885	1,631	1,739	1,819	1,950	2,033
Townsville	912	1,119	1,925	1,651	1,752	1,861	2,006	2,082
Bundaberg	841	1,059	1,854	1,607	1,706	1,792	1,911	2,008
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	864	1,082	1,866	1,616	1,706	1,804	1,940	2,014
Warwick	822	1,073	1,852	1,591	1,696	1,800	1,918	1,994

Table No. 2 - Food and Groceries Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended March, 1952.	Quarter Ended -				
				March, 1951.	June, 1951.	Sept., 1951.	Decr., 1951.	March, 1952.
Brisbane	856	971	1,993	1,610	1,690	1,847	2,145	2,290
Toowoomba	814	1,010	2,032	1,640	1,722	1,904	2,169	2,332
Rockhampton ..	895	1,012	2,075	1,725	1,801	1,931	2,194	2,373
Townsville	955	1,057	2,123	1,700	1,787	1,996	2,281	2,429
Bundaberg	903	1,027	2,050	1,701	1,773	1,909	2,142	2,377
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	864	984	2,012	1,629	1,709	1,869	2,159	2,311
Warwick	846	1,000	2,048	1,642	1,772	1,943	2,165	2,311

Table No. 3 - Clothing and Footwear Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended March, 1952.	Quarter Ended -				
				March, 1951.	June, 1951.	Sept., 1951.	Decr., 1951.	March, 1952.
Brisbane	829	1,454	2,812	2,436	2,673	2,787	2,864	2,923
Toowoomba	829	1,429	2,778	2,404	2,623	2,773	2,819	2,896
Rockhampton ..	845	1,477	2,836	2,401	2,696	2,788	2,898	2,961
Townsville	840	1,457	2,829	2,437	2,704	2,794	2,878	2,938
Bundaberg	839	1,447	2,866	2,431	2,735	2,839	2,925	2,965
Weighted Average								
Five Towns	831	1,454	2,814	2,431	2,675	2,788	2,866	2,926
Warwick	825	1,441	2,791	2,400	2,640	2,751	2,858	2,913